

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS**

**AUSTIN DIVISION**

**JOHN WALL MELTON,  
Petitioner,**

**V.**

**NATHANIEL QUARTERMAN,  
Respondent.**

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**CIVIL NO. A-07-CA-940-SS**

**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION  
OF UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE**

TO: The Honorable Sam Sparks, United States District Judge

The Magistrate Judge submits this Report and Recommendation to the District Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §636(b) and Rule 1(e) of Appendix C of the Local Court Rules of the United States District Court for the Western District of Texas, Local Rules for the Assignment of Duties to United States Magistrates, as amended, effective December 1, 2002.

Before the Court are Petitioner's Application for Habeas Corpus Relief under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 (Document 1) and memorandum in support thereof (Document 2). Petitioner, proceeding pro se, has been granted leave to proceed in forma pauperis. For the reasons set forth below, the undersigned finds that Petitioner's application for writ of habeas corpus should be dismissed without prejudice for failure to exhaust state court remedies.

**DISCUSSION**

According to Petitioner, the Director has custody of him pursuant to a judgment and sentence of the 26<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court of Williamson County, Texas. In September 1998, Petitioner

pleaded guilty to aggravated assault and was placed on deferred adjudication community supervision for ten years. In April 2003, after hearing evidence on the State's motion to adjudicate, the court revoked supervision, adjudicated Petitioner guilty, and imposed a 15-year prison sentence. Petitioner's judgment of conviction was affirmed on October 23, 2003. Melton v. State, No. 03-03-00258-CR, 2003 WL 22409495 (Tex. App. – Austin Oct. 23, 2003). Petitioner did not file a petition for discretionary review. He did, however, challenge his conviction in two state applications for habeas corpus relief and a second direct appeal. Petitioner's first state application was denied by the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals on February 1, 2006. Ex parte Melton, Appl. No. 62,264-01. Petitioner filed a pro se notice of appeal on May 17, 2007. Melton v. State, No. 03-07-00322-CR. The Third Court of Appeals dismissed it for want of jurisdiction on July 31, 2007. Petitioner filed a second state application for habeas corpus relief arguing his appeal was dismissed in violation of the Due Process Clause. The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals dismissed Petitioner's second state application on October 24, 2007, because his direct appeal was pending at the time he filed the second state application. Ex parte Melton, Appl. No. 62,264-02. Accordingly, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals has not addressed the merits of Petitioner's claim that his second appeal was dismissed in violation of the Due Process Clause.

### ANALYSIS

A fundamental prerequisite to federal habeas corpus relief under Title 28 U.S.C. §2254 is the exhaustion of all claims in state court prior to requesting federal collateral relief. Sterling v. Scott, 57 F.3d 451, 453 (5th Cir. 1995), cert. denied, 116 S. Ct. 715 (1996). Section 2254(b) provides that:

- (1) An application for a writ of habeas corpus on behalf of a person in custody pursuant to the judgment of a State court shall not be granted unless it appears that:

- (A) the applicant has exhausted the remedies available in the courts of the State; or
- (B) (i) there is an absence of available State corrective process; or  
(ii) circumstances exist that render such process ineffective to protect the rights of the applicant.

28 U.S.C. § 2254. This requirement is designed in the interests of comity and federalism to give state courts the initial opportunity to pass upon and correct errors of federal law in a state prisoner's conviction. Picard v. Connor, 404 U.S. 270, 275-76, 92 S. Ct. 509, 512 (1971). The purpose and policy underlying the exhaustion doctrine is to preserve the role of the state courts in the application and enforcement of federal law and prevent disruption of state criminal proceedings. Rose v. Lundy, 455 U.S. 509, 518, 102 S. Ct. 1198, 1203 (1982)(citing, Braden v. 30th Judicial Circuit Court of Kentucky, 410 U.S. 484, 490-91, 93 S. Ct. 1123, 1127 (1973)).

A petition under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 “must be dismissed if state remedies have not been exhausted as to any of the federal claims.” Castille v. Peoples, 489 U.S. 346, 349, 109 S. Ct. 1056, 1059 (1989). The exhaustion doctrine “requires that the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals be given an opportunity to review and rule upon the petitioner's claim before he resorts to the federal courts.” Richardson v. Procnier, 762 F.2d 429, 431 (5th Cir. 1985). Once a federal claim has been fairly presented to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, either through direct appeal or collateral attack, the exhaustion requirement is satisfied. See generally, Castille, 489 U.S. at 351, 109 S. Ct. at 1060. In order to avoid piecemeal litigation, all grounds raised in a federal application for writ of habeas corpus must first be presented to the state's highest criminal court prior to being presented in federal court. Rose, 455 U.S. at 522, 102 S. Ct. at 1205. If even one claim is unexhausted, the entire petition must be dismissed for failure to exhaust state remedies. Id.

In the present case, Petitioner has not presented his due process claim to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals. Accordingly, there has been no fair presentation of his claims to the state court, and thus, the state court has not had the initial opportunity to pass upon and correct any alleged errors of federal law. Nevertheless, the exhaustion requirement can be excused when exceptional circumstances exist. See, Deters v. Collins, 985 F.2d 789 (5th Cir. 1993). However, Petitioner makes no allegations that any exceptional circumstances are present in this case. Therefore, the Court finds that Petitioner has failed to exhaust his state court remedies and has failed to allege any circumstances which would allow the Court to excuse the exhaustion requirement.

#### RECOMMENDATION

It is therefore recommended that Petitioner's Application for Writ of Habeas Corpus be **DISMISSED WITHOUT PREJUDICE** for failure to exhaust available state court remedies.

#### OBJECTIONS

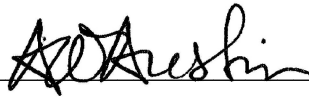
The parties may file objections to this Report and Recommendation. A party filing objections must specifically identify those findings or recommendations to which objections are being made. The District Court need not consider frivolous, conclusive, or general objections. Battles v. United States Parole Comm'n, 834 F.2d 419, 421 (5th Cir. 1987).

A party's failure to file written objections to the proposed findings and recommendations contained in this Report within ten (10) days after the party is served with a copy of the Report shall bar that party from de novo review by the district court of the proposed findings and recommendations in the Report and, except upon grounds of plain error, shall bar the party from appellate review of unobjected-to proposed factual findings and legal conclusions accepted by the

district court. See 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C); Thomas v. Arn, 474 U.S. 140, 150-153, 106 S. Ct. 466, 472-74 (1985); Douglass v. United Servs. Auto. Assoc., 79 F.3d 1415 (5th Cir. 1996)(en banc).

To the extent that a party has not been served by the Clerk with this Report and Recommendation electronically, pursuant to the CM/ECF procedures of this District, the Clerk is ORDERED to mail such party a copy of this Report and Recommendation by certified mail, return receipt requested.

SIGNED this 20<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2007.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Austin", is written over a horizontal line.

ANDREW W. AUSTIN  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE